

GOD'S WAY OF GIVING – GOD'S WAY OF RECEIVING

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PHILIPPIANS 4:15-19

Today is a bleak February day, and most of us are dreaming of a vacation, with warm weather and an ocean, and maybe a golf course. We all love the sea – it is so vast and so calming, – most of the time. Pete Royals and friends from Loris, South Carolina, came by Friday, and gave out clothing and blankets to the needy of our community. Pete and I were talking about the ocean they have in their backyard, and as we reminisced, I told him of the first time my family saw the ocean in Florida. My wife and I were speaking in a church there, and we were surprised to know that a good Christian doctor had given us a week of residency in his very spacious beach house. We arrived after dark and were escorted to our quarters, and, I must say, it was somewhat scary listening to the grating ebb and flow of the waves just a few feet behind us, and not knowing what was back there. But we grew to love the rhythm of the waves. How refreshing, how soothing it was.

Life too is ebb and flow. Like ours, Paul's life was ebb and flow. And Paul sees giving in that order also. We give; we receive. We receive; we give. One of the Constants of life. At the hands of the Philippian Church, by Epaphroditus, Paul had just received a generous gift, and he writes to show his gratitude. In his words he shows us both God's way of giving and God's way of receiving—the ebb and the flow of giving.

I. GOD'S WAY OF GIVING

A.

God's Way of Giving is Giving With Faithfulness. Paul writes, (vs. 15) "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only." He both compliments the Philippians and shames the other churches for their lack of giving. He is almost saying, "There were other churches, but where were they? Why didn't they give? But, Philippians, you were faithful. I commend you."

The churches who did not give were accountable, not to Paul, to God. We too are accountable to God. Throughout the world servants of God herald the Gospel of Jesus Christ to myriad people groups in myriad languages, and we, through our Cooperative Program preach the Word through them. If we fail to give, they fail to live. If we fail to send, how shall they hear? Faithfulness of giving is God's way of giving. God wants every church to preach the Gospel and to send out others to preach the same Gospel. If we fail to give, they fail to Live. And if we faithfully give we will also faithfully receive. So long as we support missions we will never lack that which we need. In our faithfulness, we will see the faithfulness of God.

Paul heaps icing on the cake, complimenting them for their faithfulness in giving. He writes, (vs. 16) "For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again to my necessity."

The Philippians had never failed him; nor would they fail him, for they were giving God's Way.

B.

Moreover, God's Way of Giving is Giving With Purpose. Paul writes again, (vs 17) "Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Paul burned with a passion for souls that he could present to his Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. He writes to the Philippians that their gift would help him to win souls, but would be, in fact, fruit that would be added to their account; for they also would be partners in the work of bringing souls to peace with God. In *The Pulpit Commentary*, we find these words: "But he (Paul) sought for the fruit corresponding to the gifts. Every time that they gave they were sowing; and the fruit would grow up for them in the next world. Every time they gave there was entry made in their name and to their account in the ledger of God, increasing the asset which God, as Debtor, would yet make good to them." God's way of giving is to give expecting that your gift will further the Gospel of Jesus Christ and bring the good gift of salvation and light to people in the darkness of sin. God's way of giving is to give faithfully and to give with purpose.

II. GOD'S WAY OF RECEIVING.

A.

God's Way of Receiving is Receiving With Grace. Paul received gifts this way, for he knew that the ability to give or to receive was an act of the grace of God who enables us to both give and to receive.

Paul was extremely grateful to this good Church that had literally adopted him. But he knew why they loved him. He had preached Christ and they had believed. The *Interpreters Bible* says, "The Philippians had come to his rescue more than once, and for the timely help in a critical emergency, he owed them a lifelong gratitude. He is grateful for what they have done now, but tells them that the money itself has been only a secondary matter. 'Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit.' 'Fruit' was a word commonly applied to the increment produced by money, and Paul plays again with financial terms. 'I do not want the capital but the interest: and it accrues to your account, not mine.' Paul knew that any gift to him was a gift to God given to him; and it was a gift of God given to Paul through the Philippians. You see, all giving is God giving, not man giving – except through God's grace. God allows us to partner with Himself. God gives to us so that we can give to others to further the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Giving, then, is an act of God, or better still, a partnership formed through His grace. I cannot give what I do not have, and I only have because of what God has given me. If I work and earn money, it is God's gift of strength that allows me to work; so then, each time I give, I must say to myself, "It is God's grace that allows me to give; what is given to me is His gift that I am allowed to pass on to others; and those who receive the Gospel will receive the greatest blessing of all, God's gift of salvation." It is all of grace, all of grace.

All that we have is but that which God has given to us, has placed within our hands, has entrusted to us as good stewards in His Kingdom. The interest we receive comes from the investment we make, and whether it is wisely invested in the Gospel of

Jesus Christ. Unfortunately too many church members are too much like Solomon in the Old Testament who spent more on his houses and horses than upon the Temple of God. But thank God, he did build the Temple. If we invest little, if we sow just a few seeds, if we keep our riches and die without investing them in the Gospel we will receive the reward that we deserve, not the reward God wants us to receive. You see, God keeps accurate books. And he gives us grace both to give and to receive according to His Grace.

B.

God's Way of Receiving is Receiving With Trust, for without faith we cannot please God, the Author of our Being. In vs. 19 we find the blueprint of trust: "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." This is an absolute promise of the God who cannot lie: If We Give God's Way, We Will Receive God's Way. This is the 'ebb and flow' of Christian giving.

Again the *Interpreters Bible* gives us a good word: "The phrase 'My God' has here a special significance. Paul cannot repay them himself, so he throws the debt on God, whose servant he is. God will take charge of this, as of all Paul's other obligations, and will give the recompense according to his riches. By their gift the Philippians have won the favor of God, and He will reward them out of His infinite wealth."

Indeed, God is infinitely wealthy; and out of His storehouse He will bless abundantly and provide for all our needs even as we provide for the needs of others. Jesus said, "Ask and ye shall receive." (Mt. 7:7) He also said, "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." (Lk. 6:38). As surely as we give in Jesus' Name, we will receive for Jesus' sake, over and over, again and again, and to spare. So, then, if we Give God's Way, we will Receive God's Way. *The Pulpit Commentary* says, "The Philippians had supplied Paul's need; Paul's God, in turn, would, for him, supply their need. He would supply the whole extent of their, temporal and spiritual ... The thought of a rich God glorifying His people ... calls forth an ascription of glory."

The question for you, for me, for this church, for all churches that call themselves Christian is this: Are we Giving God's Way, and are we Receiving God's Way? May God help us to invest more in the Kingdom Company so that we may also do more for the King and receive more from the King of Glory, the Lord strong and mighty! When we Give God's Way, we will Receive God's Way. This is the ebb and flow of giving.